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ABSTRACT

Education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship between teacher and learner. Although andragogy has provided many useful approaches for improving educational methodology and has been accepted almost universally, it still has connotations of a teacher-learner relationship. Some have argued that the rapid rate of change in society and the so-called information explosion suggests that educators, including those in Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector, should now be looking at educational approaches where learners themselves determine what and how learning should occur. Heutagogy, which is the study of self-determined learning, may be viewed as a natural progression from earlier educational methodologies and may well provide the optimal approach to learning in the 21st century. The Public Sector Executive Management Program at Southern Cross University, which is a postgraduate course to train students to work as troubleshooters, problem solvers, and general consultants in charge of improvement, illustrates the use of a heutagogical approach. Heutagogical approaches to VET recognize the critical importance of learners in all aspects of the learning process. Educators must help learners remember how to learn, develop confidence in their perceptions, and learn to question their interpretation of reality within a framework of competence. (Contains 20 references.) (MN)

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Moving from andragogy to heutagogy in vocational education

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It is thirty years since Knowles introduced us to the concept of andragogy as a new way of approaching adult education. Much in the world has changed since that time, and we all know that the rate of change seems to increase every year. But has our approach to vocational education and training truly changed? This paper suggests there is a need to move from andragogy towards truly self-determined learning. The concept of truly self-determined learning, called heutagogy, builds on humanistic theory and approaches to learning described in the 1950s. It is suggested that heutagogy is appropriate to the needs of learners in the workplace in the twenty-first century, particularly in the development of individual capability. A number of implications of heutagogy for vocational education are discussed.

What is heutagogy?

Education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship between the teacher and the learner. It was always the teacher who decided *what* the learner needed to know, and indeed *how* the knowledge and skills should be taught. In the past thirty years or so there has been quite a revolution in education through research into how people learn, and resulting from that, further work on how teaching could and should be provided. While andragogy (Knowles 1970) provided many useful approaches for improving educational methodology, and indeed has been accepted almost universally, it still has connotations of a teacher-learner relationship. It may be argued that the rapid rate of change in society, and the so-called information explosion, suggest that we should now be looking at an educational approach where it is the learner him/herself who determines what and how learning should take place. Heutagogy, the study of self-determined learning, may be viewed as a natural progression from earlier educational methodologies - in particular from capability development - and may well provide the optimal approach to learning in the twenty-first century.

The distinction Knowles (1970) made between how adults and children learn was an important landmark in teaching and learning practices in vocational education and training, and in higher education. Andragogy, and the principles of adult learning that were derived from it, transformed face-to-face teaching and provided a rationale for distance education based on the notion of self-directedness. There is, however,

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another revolution taking place in educational circles that appears to go one step beyond andragogy, to a new set of principles and practices that may have application across the whole spectrum of the education and learning lifespan.

This revolution recognises the changed world in which we live. A world in which: information is readily and easily accessible; change is so rapid that traditional methods of training and education are totally inadequate; discipline-based knowledge is inappropriate to prepare for living in modern communities and workplaces; learning is increasingly aligned with what we do; modern organisational structures require flexible learning practices; and there is a need for immediacy of learning. In response to this environment, there have emerged some innovative approaches that address the deficiencies of the pedagogical and andragogical methods.

The idea that, given the right environment, people can learn and be self-directed in the way learning is applied is not new, and has been an important humanistic theme that can be followed through the philosopher Heider (Emery 1974), phenomenology (Rogers 1951), systems thinking (Emery and Trist 1965), double loop and organisational learning (Argyris and Schon 1996), andragogy (Knowles 1984), learner-managed learning (Graves 1993; Long 1990), action learning (Kemmis and McTaggart 1998), capability (Stephenson 1992), and work-based learning (Gattegno 1996; Hase 1998).

The thrust that underscores these approaches is a desire to go beyond the simple acquisition of skills and knowledge as a learning experience. They emphasise a more holistic development in the learner of an independent capability (Stephenson 1993), the capacity for questioning one's values and assumptions (Argyris and Schon 1996), and the critical role of the system-environment interface (Emery and Trist 1965).

Heutagogy is the study of self-determined learning and draws together some of the ideas presented by these various approaches to learning. It is also an attempt to challenge some ideas about teaching and learning that still prevail in teacher-centred learning and the need for, as Bill Ford (1997) eloquently puts it, 'knowledge sharing' rather than 'knowledge hoarding'. In this respect, heutagogy looks to the future in which knowing how to learn will be a fundamental skill, given the pace of innovation and the changing structure of communities and workplaces.

Rogers (1969) suggests that people want to learn and have a natural inclination to do so throughout their life. Indeed, he argues strongly that teacher-centred learning has been grossly over emphasised. He based his *student-centred* approach on five key hypotheses:

- We cannot teach another person directly: we can only facilitate learning;
- People learn significantly only those things that they perceive as being involved in the maintenance or enhancement of the structure of self;
- Experience, which if assimilated would involve a change in the organisation of self, tends to be resisted through denial or distortion of symbolisation, and

the structure and organisation of self appear to become more rigid under threat;

- Experience which is perceived as inconsistent with the self can only be assimilated if the current organisation of self is relaxed and expanded to include it; and

- The educational system which most effectively promotes significant learning is one in which threat to the self, as learner, is reduced to a minimum.

Rogers (1951) also suggests that learning is natural 'like breathing', and that it is an internal process controlled by the learner. Emery (1993, p 79) comments further on 'learning to learn' and on the concept of learning as practiced in the current institutions of learning at the time. He said: 'in learning to learn we are learning to learn from our own perceptions; learning to accept our own perceptions as a direct form of knowledge and learning to suspect forms of knowledge that advance themselves by systematically discounting direct knowledge that people have in their life-sized range of things, events and processes'.

The world is no place for the inflexible, the unprepared and the ostrich with its head in sand, and this applies to organisations as well as individuals. Capable people are more likely to be able to deal effectively with the turbulent environment in which they live by possessing an 'all round' capacity centred on self-efficacy; knowing how to learn; creativity; the ability to use competencies in novel as well as familiar situations; and working with others.

Research and theorising about capability would suggest that there is a need to develop an understanding of how to develop capable people (eg Graves 1993; Stephenson 1994; Stephenson and Weil 1993) and how to enable capability to express itself in organisations (eg Cairns and Hase 1996; Hase 1998; Hase et al 1998; Hase and Davis 1999). Both of these needs require a heutagogical approach.

A heutagogical approach recognises the need to be flexible in the learning, where the teacher provides resources but the learner designs the actual course he or she might take by negotiating the learning. Thus learners might read around critical issues or questions and determine what is of interest and relevance to them and then negotiate further reading and assessment tasks. With respect to the latter, assessment becomes more of a learning experience rather than a means to measure attainment. As teachers we should concern ourselves with developing the learner's capability, not just embedding discipline-based skills and knowledge. We should relinquish any power we deem ourselves to have.

The issue of enabling capability is no less interesting and challenging, and confronts the issue of power more directly. Managers and supervisors in organisations need to be capable people themselves in order to facilitate the capability of others. Highly controlled managerial styles usually reflect high levels of anxiety or the need for power on the part of the manager. As a recent study of a number of Australian organisations has shown (Hase et al 1998), a most important characteristic of a capable organisation is the capacity for managers to empower others, to share information, and develop capability. These are not new concepts of course, and are

endorsed by many contemporary management writers. It is perhaps surprising that many managers continue to ignore the evidence of the success of such approaches to people in organisational management.

The reasons for this lack of change might be found in the way in which managers are trained or maybe not trained. There is a heavy emphasis in our management schools and in organisations on the technical aspects of management. The plethora of short management training programs attests to the simplistic approaches we take in addressing management deficiency. A heutagogical approach would develop the capability, not just the competency of managers. We might then see more innovative approaches to fully enabling people to express their capability (and further develop it by doing so), such as that found recently in a major mining and construction company (Davis and Hase 1999) and in other Australian commercial and government organisations (Hase et al 1998).

Heutagogy and vocational education and training

The Public Sector Executive Management Program (or PSEMP for short) is run annually at Southern Cross University for the RAAF. It is a postgraduate level course and is highly intensive, with students working up to 60 hours a week for five months. The aim of PSEMP is to graduate students who can work as trouble shooters, problem solvers and general consultants on change and improvement in a wide variety of organisations around Australia. One of the authors, Chris Kenyon, designed the PSEMP in 1995 and since then we have endeavoured to use a heutagogical approach when working in different areas with the students.

All consultants seem to need masses of data, and while facts and figures are all very well, students identified their need to be highly proficient at interviewing people in order to get information and opinions. So, theories of interviewing were introduced to the PSEMP in 1996. In 1997 students asked to extend their abilities, and so practical experiences in interviewing were introduced to the program. Over the past three years our lecturers have had to learn more and more about the nature of communication during interviews, and this year, as a result of requests, we'll be covering the extra dimension of seeing an interview situation from the interviewee's perspective. Look on the net and you won't find much on this addition to the program, so we're going to have to do some learning and research ourselves in order to meet student needs.

Consultants are greatly in demand when it comes time to formulate an organisation's annual or five year plan. Now, while we can teach the theories of planning, students soon find that they also need practical experience; this was introduced to the program in 1998. Since then, the demand has been for even more practical experience, particularly in the area of reviewing and updating the plans that have been produced. Again, there is little information around on this topic. This year, not only will lecturers need to research the topic more exhaustively before the program begins, but during the program itself students will be asked to research for themselves how two or three organisations use their plans as working documents rather than as glossy brochures. Their findings will provide useful learning for our staff.

An essential part of a successful plan is the identification of performance measures that can be used to assess how well an organisation is progressing. While we have taught Performance Measurement at some length, our focus was on commercial organisations that produced something. Students found the associated theories to be inadequate when dealing with bureaucratic organisations like state departments, and so we've had to extend our knowledge in this area. Again, the demand for practical experience has been high, and so this has been introduced. This year students have already asked for more concrete examples of how performance measures are derived. So we are taking perhaps the unusual step of inviting previous graduates to give presentations on how they derived the performance measures for flying safety that have been adopted in Australia and several European countries. Our staff will listen and learn from these presentations.

Heutagogy and vocational education and training

Heutagogical approaches to vocational education and training recognise the critical importance of the learner in all aspects - not just the teaching - of the learning process. The aim is to enable people to remember how to learn and facilitate the development of capability. Thus the major stakeholder is involved in the determination of learning objectives and how these may be achieved. Clearly this is a negotiated experience if formal learning is involved. So, the emphasis is on process rather than outcome. By being person-centred, ownership over the learning is enhanced, as well as the likelihood that the learning will in fact be meaningful.

Most evaluations of learning occur at the end of some sort of program. This approach suggests that evaluation is ongoing and formative rather than summative, in similar ways to action learning processes. This means that programs need to be flexible enough to change. In non-formal learning settings, such as the day-to-day activity in the workplace, it is a question of designing ways for people to get together and harness their learning in relation to current projects. One way of achieving this is described in detail in another paper in this conference by Davis and Hase, called 'The river of learning'.

There is an assumption in all this that while competence in a particular area is essential, there is a need to move beyond knowledge and skills that really measure the past, towards capability that is preparation for the future.

There are many good examples of workplace learning in the vocational education and training sector now. Usually these involve at some level work-based projects as a means of assessment, as well as facilitated learning as opposed to teaching. The negotiated design of relevant assessment between the learner and the facilitator is essential if the learning is to be at all relevant and person-centred. The guru factor is removed.

It is surprising the extent to which effort is put into designing what are purported to be self-directed learning materials in print form and now on the web as 'online learning'. Most learning materials of this form are in fact teacher centred rather than self-directed and usually consist of directed reading, content and concept summaries and then activities, or some such combination. A heutagogical approach emphasises the provision of resources rather than content. If an outcome or assessment is designed in the right kind of way (and negotiated) and a few signposts are provided,

the learners have to try and make sense of the topic or issue and come to their own conclusions (which they will do anyway despite what the teacher says). Learner-directed questions become the norm rather than teacher-directed answers.

Team-based approaches to learning assists people to learn how to cooperate in teams. However, there is not much point in this process if, in fact, assessment is designed as competitive rather than cooperative. Again, negotiation is a critical skill and needs to be as much a win-win process as possible.

As Dawkins has suggested, answers are easy to find; it is knowing what questions to ask that is the real limit to our understanding. A real challenge to the designers of learning experiences, whether they are formal or informal, is to be creative enough to have learners ask questions about the universe they inhabit. Our education and training, and management systems, are often designed in such a way as to limit this kind of creative thinking. These systems would rather provide people with the question and the answer together as a learning package. Heutagogical approaches suggest a more active role for the learner.

It's interesting how much tacit learning people have about all sorts of things, yet they rarely articulate it. One way of enhancing learning is to access this tacit learning and then have them question and improve it in new ways that make sense to them. The key to this is how to create opportunities in every day work environments where this can happen, without having to resort to classrooms and the internet. One of the most common reasons that I hear about why workers do not access formal training programs is that there is so little 'down time' to do so; not enough rainy days. Making learning an integral part of day-to-day work and finding ways to harness that learning and make sense of it is one of the most critical challenges that face educators and managers in modern organisations.

Summary

People know how to learn; they did it from birth until they went to school. It's a question of helping them remember how to do it. We need to help people have confidence in their perceptions and how to question their interpretation of reality, within a framework of competence.

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